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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Statement by Judge Marvin Jones, War Food Administrator
before the House Agriculture Committee, 10:00 a. m.,
Wednesday, October 6, 1943.

Our records show that for the last several years the farm production level has been high. But there are extraordinary demands for food by our armed forces, for our allies and lend-lease, and particularly from our civilian consumers which have resulted from the record national income, heavy employment and extraordinary purchasing power.

The record food output has called for teamwork and continues to call for cooperation by producers, processors and distributors, and the State and Federal agencies who are concerned with the food problem.

The State and County Agricultural War Boards handle the food program at the State and local levels. These Boards are made up of representatives of State Colleges, State Commissioners of Agriculture, State Directors of Vocational Education, and local representatives of the War Food Administration. The County War Boards deal directly with local producers and food handlers. Voluntary committees of farmers handle rationing and other problems pertaining to farm gasoline, tires, farm machinery and other scarce equipment and supplies. These volunteer committees perform their difficult tasks without pay in the 3,000 counties. Thus, the forces directly concerned with the food program are mobilized into working units, across the Nation, for all-out food production and efficient distribution.

To help mobilize all available farm labor, the War Food Administration has successfully relied upon the cooperation of the States, counties and communities, where both the problem and the solution existed. Some 650,000 neighborhood leaders are cooperating in arranging exchanges of labor and labor saving machinery. The local response to the farmers' labor demand has been excellent. Service clubs, women's clubs, boy scouts, defense councils and other local groups helped mobilize townspeople and youth for full and part-time farm work. In addition, the War Food Administration has arranged for the use of war prisoners on farms, imported about 45,000 workers from Mexico and 13,000 workers from the Bahama Islands and Jamaica, and assisted in organizing the U. S. Crop Corps which has provided hundreds of thousands of farm workers. In three instances, to meet emergency demands, the War Department has made troop units available for farm work. Deferment of essential farm operators and workers has proved of great value in helping meet the farm labor problem.

Sufficient farm machinery to handle the increased production, in the face of a reduced labor supply, has been a problem. Many areas experienced some difficulty in spite of the efficient local mobilization for the most effective use of machinery now on farms. WPB Order L-257, effective July 1, provides for the manufacture of farm machinery for 1944 at an average of 80 percent of the high level of production in 1940. This equipment will not be available for the 1943 crop, with the exception of some harvesting machinery. Meantime local volunteer farmer committees have done an excellent job of allocating the small amount of new machinery available to farmers in 1943.

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Food available to civilian consumers in 1943 is slightly in excess of that available for the average of the pre-war period 1935-39. It is above the level of any year in the 20's or the 30's.

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The increasing need for food for direct war use and for civilians calls for the maximum food production possible in 1944. Our civilians, who in 1942 consumed 86 percent of our food production and for the next nine months or a year will consume some 75 percent of our food supply, must be provided with adequate food to enable them to continue at their present high rate of war production. There must be adequate supplies for our armed forces on every front with a margin for military contingencies. The military successes of our allies against our common enemy justify our continuing to provide food under the present lend-lease arrangement, so that they may continue their efforts. It is in the national self-interest that our allies continue in top fighting condition with the necessary food. There will be increased opportunity to aid our war effort by making some food supplies available in the areas of the liberated nations.

Hence, plans for 1944 must be premised on the fact that the maximum possible food production can be used to advantage.

In making plans for the 1944 food program we are concerned with three major problems:

1. Adequate production to meet essential food and fiber requirements for military, civilian, Lend-Lease and other needs.
2. To obtain that production, without increasing the cost of living, through development of support prices and loans.

3. Adequate distribution of food supplies among different claimant agencies and proper channeling of foods to the ultimate consumer.

Plans for 1944 call for the largest crop acreage in United States history and also for maintaining high production levels for meat, dairy products and eggs.

Just what the various acreage and livestock goals shall be for 1944 is now being discussed in meetings in every State, followed by county meetings in each State. In these meetings the crop and livestock goals will be discussed with farmers and farm committeemen.

We contemplate asking for the planting of a record total of 380 million acres in crops for harvest in 1944. This compares with 354 million acres planted in 1942 and 364 million acres in 1943. This can be done in keeping with good soil conservation practice. We must not repeat the blunder of the other war when land was plowed up without regard to its fitness for farm use and our future soil resources were wasted by the creation of the Dust Bowl.

The largest percentage increases in production are recommended for those crops which furnish food for direct human consumption, such as soybeans, peanuts, dry beans and peas, fresh and processed vegetables.

In developing our livestock program for 1944 we are faced with the necessity of balancing our livestock with available feed supplies. We have greatly increased our livestock population within the last few years, partly as a result of the reserves of feeds that had been accumulated over the years and were on hand at the beginning of the War. The increase in our livestock population is also partly due to 1943 farrowing of spring pigs even greater than the increase asked for.

Here is our situation in a nutshell: (1) the total supply of feed for the year beginning October 1, 1943, will be slightly less than the quantity actually fed in the year just closed; (2) during the first part of this feeding year, at least, the number of livestock and poultry on hand will be somewhat larger than last year. The feed supply per head of livestock will be less than in the year just closed, but about the same as the quantity used per head in 1940. Under the circumstances, we will have to be very careful in the use of feed in order to maintain the largest practical balanced production of livestock and poultry.

Last year we encouraged everyone to feed as heavily as possible in order to increase production of meat, dairy and poultry products. It will now be necessary to resort to more normal methods of feeding. We have somewhat less feed this year than we had last year, although there is more livestock to consume it.

Our reduction in support prices for hogs to become effective October 1, 1944, and our removal of the slaughter quotas were instituted to encourage the producers to market more livestock this year rather than to hold them over for heavier feeding. At the same time we have arranged with the military services that they stockpile meats during the heavy slaughter run of livestock.

In fact the War Food Administration has been able to achieve complete coordination of all procurement by Federal agencies so that they do their buying during seasons of heavy marketing to avoid disrupting civilian supplies in seasons when the marketing is lighter. Stocks of food in the hands of Federal agencies have been made interchangeable, further reducing the impact of Federal requirements.

For 1944, we are suggesting a total production of 122 billion pounds of milk compared with an indicated production in 1943 of 118 billion pounds. This level can be obtained from the number of milk cows now on farms but it will require a better relationship between the prices of dairy products and production costs than prevails at present. Action has been taken to assist dairymen in feed deficit areas to obtain supplies of hay at reasonable prices. We are also moving grain from Canada into the United States to supplement our feed supplies.

We are asking for increased production of both fresh and processed vegetables for 1944, not only in commercial truck crops, but also in still further expansion of nearby market gardens and victory gardens.

Our suggested production of oil crops calls for another large increase of soybeans and peanuts. Further increases in the production of dry beans and peas are also suggested. In the latter two products especially we are counting on considerable contributions from other countries to meet the total needs of our fighting allies and the liberated countries.

The suggested production program for 1944 has been sent out to the 48 State War Boards for their consideration and suggestions. We do not expect to announce a final 1944 goals program until there has been full opportunity for local discussion and suggested revisions in each State. We are asking the State War Boards to work with local people in developing a goals program within the pattern of national needs that will fit their State conditions and that will enable every farm and every farmer in the State to make his maximum contribution to food production.

We expect to continue to consult fully with Members of Congress on our tentative plans for the 1944 food program.

Prices, as well as goals, also will be discussed at the State meetings, because of the relationship which prices bear to needed production. This is necessary, just as it is necessary to consider, and to discuss with the builder, the price of tanks or planes when arranging for the rate of their production.

To get the maximum production planned for 1944 there must be certain adjustments in our structure of support prices to farmers. Although the general level of farm prices is fairly adequate, adjustments in support prices for some commodities must be made to cover the resulting added costs and risks, which are necessarily incident to increased production by old producers and any production by new producers of a given commodity.

I hope that Congress may be willing to increase the funds available to the Commodity Credit Corporation so that the powers of that Corporation can be used to the fullest extent in increasing food production. These powers could also be used to prevent increases in consumer prices.

To secure maximum production of essential crops, the price support should be one that would last through the production, harvest and marketing season and it should be set up and understood by the farmer to be on that basis. Adequate price protection, as an encouragement to production, includes both as early assurance to the farmer as possible and also the understanding that these supports will prevail.

We are now allocating our important foods on a quarterly basis, as between civilian and non-civilian needs, and among the various non-civilian claimants. Each claimant agency is asked for its total and breakdown of requirements and to consider adjustments and substitutions for bringing requirements more into line with available supplies. When complete balance cannot be arranged, preference is given to the most urgent needs. Necessary civilian requirements have been met up to now without serious conflict with non-civilian requirements.

The civilian per capita food supply in 1943 slightly exceeds the average for the pre-war period 1935-39. It is anticipated that with average weather the 1944 output of food will be the largest in history, and that it will provide civilians with food supplies that will compare favorably with pre-war supplies. Civilians may not be able to purchase all of every kind of food they desire, but there will be a sufficient amount of good wholesome food.

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